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# MISSION

JUNE 1975 VOLUME 8 NUMBER 12

TO BRING THE GOSPEL TO THE SKINNY WHITE CHRISTIAN MOVES TO THE GHETTO  
TO PROVIDE A VEHICLE FOR COMMUNICATING THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL TO THE SKINNY WHITE CHRISTIAN MOVES TO THE GHETTO  
CONTINENTAL POLICY STATEMENT JULY 1975

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF VICTOR J. HUNTER  
MANAGING EDITOR RAY T. CHESTER  
LITERARY EDITOR JAMES G. GIBSON

## A SKINNY WHITE CHRISTIAN MOVES TO THE GHETTO

JUNE 1975

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# MISSION

JUNE, 1975, VOLUME 8, NUMBER 12

TO EXPLORE THOROUGHLY THE SCRIPTURES AND THEIR MEANING ... TO UNDERSTAND AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE THE WORLD IN WHICH THE CHURCH LIVES AND HAS HER MISSION ... TO PROVIDE A VEHICLE FOR COMMUNICATING THE MEANING OF GOD'S WORD TO OUR CONTEMPORARY WORLD."

EDITORIAL POLICY STATEMENT, JULY, 1967

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# A Skinny White Christian Moves to the Ghetto

BY PHILLIP ROSEBERRY

Hey, mirror. You see this face? This is me, Phil Roseberry, the inner city worker. I've been training here at Camp Shiloh for over a week now and I am ready to tackle the Brooklyn Ghetto."

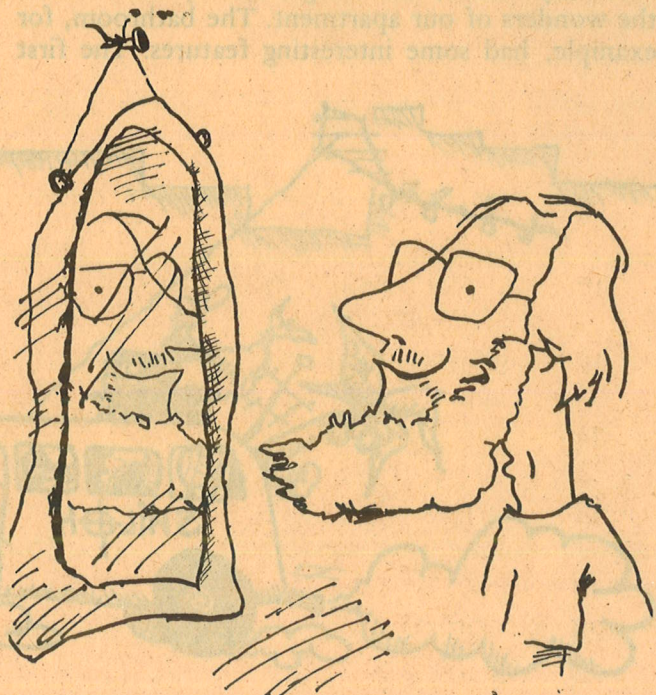
On this fateful day in June, 1970, my wife, Donna, and I, joined by twelve other Shiloh workers, loaded our belongings and ourselves upon the Blue Goose—the Shiloh bus—to head for the Brooklyn ghetto. I had hopes that I could kind of sneak in. You know, set up shop, get comfortable, and gradually meet a person or two. However, when I looked around at this large bus stuffed wall to wall with junk and white people, and when I noticed that the roar of the bus alerted the population within a five mile radius of our presence, I began to question how sneaky our entrance would be.

Sure enough, when the "Goose" thundered to a stop in front of 411 Hinsdale, a building in which we were destined to live, it was immediately surrounded by a sea of kids screaming, "Shiloh! Shiloh!" and calling the names of the workers they knew. And as we stepped off the bus, they grabbed our legs and asked, "What's your name," and, "When is camp going to start?" And when we began to unload our baggage—"Let me help!" Before I could protest, our stuff was going in every direction. I just hoped that some of it made it to our apartment.

I stood on the street for a moment to view my new home. I thought, "Gee. Now I know what

Germany looked like after they bombed it out." The buildings were tall, dirty, and a somber dark brown. Glass was strewn all over the sidewalks. And there was no grass—just cement.

And people. The June day was hot, too hot to be upstairs, and myriads of people, some with lawn chairs, had descended onto the street to keep cool. I had heard that there were three to five hundred children on the block, and I felt that all of them



(Hey, mirror. You see this face?)

PHILLIP ROSEBERRY is in his fifth year as a minister in Shiloh's inner city program in New York City.



and their relatives were out there watching us unload.

Man, I felt white. I could see that there was no such thing as getting lost in a crowd in East New York. At least not for me.

I walked down the hall of my building. The smell of urine was distastefully present and the dirty walls had been freely written on. I mounted the steps and, at the first landing, got my initial glimpse of our "courtyard." It was a dirty, garbage-filled abyss between my building and the next. The garbage exuded its thick, nauseating scent. I looked down, gulped, and said to myself, "That's one thing I'll never get used to."

Somehow we got our stuff into our apartment and got set up for our first night in the ghetto. We climbed into bed and thus got our first chance to study the cracked plaster ceiling.

I could still smell the stench coming up from the courtyard. Some people across the street were blasting "ABC," the current Jackson Five hit, over and over for the benefit of the entire community. Someone on a counter stereo in the building or so away was blaring the Spanish alternative. I looked up at the cracked ceiling. I kept telling myself how cool this was and how cool I was for being here, but my stomach was saying, as it rotated and gurgled, "What in the world is happening?"

**B**ut that night passed as did many others, and we got to explore some of the wonders of our apartment. The bathroom, for example, had some interesting features. The first

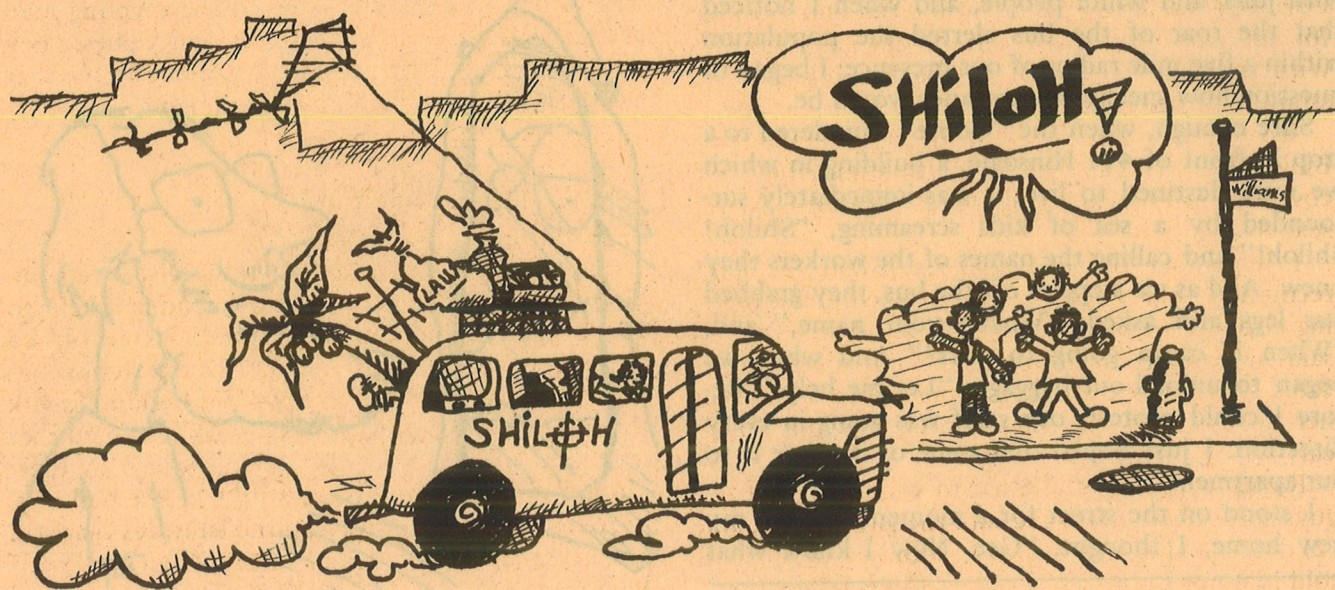
time I went in, I noticed the bare pipes, fallen plaster, and rough walls. It surely wasn't like my "water closet" back home.

And I soon discovered that when I assumed a sitting position upon the commode, a steady drip, drip from above would land on my neck. And, if I would happen to hear an overhead explosion (not unlike a distant flush), it was time to hustle before I was drenched by the waterfall from the toiletry one floor up. I thought of passing out umbrellas to guests.

The apartment seemed to be filled with roaches. There is an old Brooklyn proverb: "If the roaches stop holding hands, the walls will fall down." I reacted pretty strongly to these ugly little bugs, so I set out to wipe them out. I'd smack them with a newspaper or my bare hand; it didn't matter. For a while I kept them in a jar so I could show the folks back home, but Donna started complaining of nausea attacks, so I just kept a mental record of the death toll. According to my official calculations, I singlehandedly slaughtered 1078 roaches that first summer. It could have been more but I reached my goal of 1000 in seven weeks and slacked off.

As time went by, we became acquainted with some of the people in the building. The denizens included our immediate neighbors, the Howells, who served me my first chitterlings; two old ladies who always wore nightgowns; a Black Panther who wore a bullet on a chain around his neck; and across the courtyard, some junkies who sometimes hung out the window to shoot up.

And there were the kids, some of whom we tried to work with. As soon as we entered the city we had set up our daily Bible classes, field trips,



*(I had hopes that I could kind of sneak in.)*



special classes, etc. This, combined with our preparation time, kept us moving all day.

It seemed like I took a lot in that first summer. And I had to deal with a lot of stuff going on inside of me. Some of my fantasies seemed to fizzle. For example, I had always been excited about being an "inner-city worker." The term had emotional neon lights around it, and I supposed that when I became one, I would have neon lights around me. However, when I looked in my cracked mirror, I still had acne and my hair was still receding. Agonizingly, it was still me.

And working was not always as electric as I had imagined it would be. First, I couldn't maintain the pace I had anticipated. You see, I had planned on cleaning up Brooklyn my first year, tackle Manhattan the second, move on to Bronx the third, and so forth. However, when I surveyed my efforts at the conclusion of the summer, I had difficulty in discerning my dent in people with whom I had worked, much less the rest of my block or Brooklyn.

My method for changing the world also had to be reconsidered. The long political and religious raps I had envisioned with community radicals seldom materialized. The people seemed too busy forging a life in the world in which they found themselves. I was forced to refocus my messianic visions into cups of cold water—field trips, classes about Jesus, an occasional hug, and mostly, an incredible amount of work.

As fall came, I became the coach of the Senior Shiloh basketball team. What a crew! There was Gatch, skinny as could be and with a profile that inspired the nickname, "Horseface;" Toby, our loud, portly center; Ski, nice guy and good shot; Fess, former drug addict, now clean and working for an anti-drug agency; Ken, devout Jehovah's Witness; Randy, resident genius; and eight other strange, albeit beautiful guys.

With every practice, I held an accompanying Bible class. These I found quite stimulating. We covered a whole gamut of topics: stealing, sharing, sex, etc.

I remember our class on sex. First, the guys recounted their exploits. Toby talked about starting at ten years of age with a girl at school. The girl said he had gotten her pregnant, but his dad indicated that her age made this impossible, so he beat her up. For this, the school threw him out on his ear.

Randy suggested the ethic to which most of the guys subscribed: (1) make sure the girl is clean, and (2) don't make any girls big. Randy's father had told him not to bring any babies to his house.

As the various stories were chronicled, I had little to say. My premarital sexual experience could



*(I kept telling myself how cool this was . . .)*

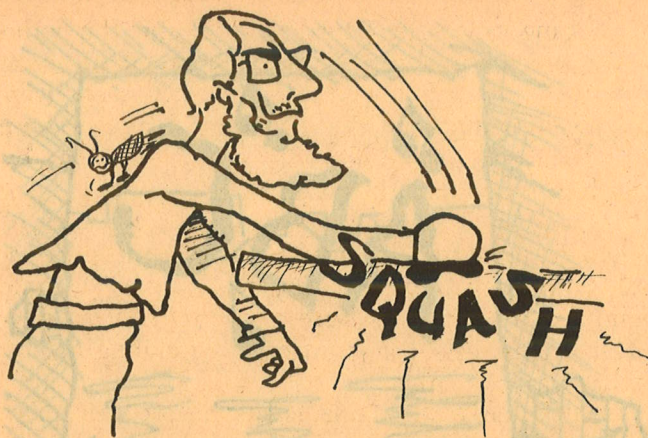
basically be summarized as "zilch." I was deeply aware of the difference of my experience. But then, deciding to risk it, I related my values on the subject and told them that my wife and I were married as virgins. I must confess that I expected them to laugh. Instead, there was a lull, and then Randy said, "If my girl was a virgin, I'd take her down the streets and show her to everyone with pride. And I'd tell everyone that she had saved her love for me."

The other guys concurred, and I realized that if I was willing to sincerely listen to these young men as they shared their experiences and values, they would sincerely listen to me. It seemed to me that I couldn't ask for much more than that.

**S**omething else I remember about that first year was coming back to Brooklyn after our Christmas break. As we turned the corner to Williams Avenue, Donna looked at me and quipped, "Well, at least our building is still there." Closer examination, however, revealed that it mostly wasn't. It seems that someone's TV blew up and set fire to the whole front of the building.

After we made our way up the hallways that still reeked of smoke, we found that though our apartment was extant, the fire had left its mark. The front door lay on the floor of the kitchen, felled by the firemen who had broken in to check the





(... so I set out to wipe them out.)

apartment. They also, as a matter of fire fighting policy, had knocked out our windows.

When the firemen left, of course, whosoever willed came in. A brief examination disclosed that our water pipes were gone, our beds and much of our furniture had vanished, and books and garbage were dumped everywhere. Back in the high rise dorm at David Lipscomb College, I had always supposed that it would be kind of cool to be ripped off for Jesus. But standing in the midst of this mess, my basic response was, "Yecchh!"

As stated, the door was off its hinges and I did not know how long it would take for the landlord to get it fixed. So, I devised an elaborate burglar alarm. I leaned the door in its place, then angled my police lock pole (a metal pole about five feet long that leans into a socket in the door) against the door and placed a large frying pan directly beneath the pole on the floor. My theory—when the door was dislodged, the bar would drop into the frying pan, causing a loud noise which would awaken me. At this point, I would jump up and repel any invader. I looked at the product of my fertile brain and thought, "Yes, necessity is the mother of invention."

The first night I set my alarm, our neighbors (Shiloh workers) had a guest who came in the evening and left quite early the following morning. Upon leaving, however, he discovered that he had left some of his gear in our apartment. So, he came in through my rigged door, took his stuff, and left. I woke up a couple of hours later to discover that my ingenuity, as well as Mrs. Necessity, had flunked.

Somehow we survived that first year and moved into another. I had a new basketball team which I took to Nashville during the spring break.

In Nashville, I, with two of my guys (Vernon, whom I called the "Rock Man" due to his membership in the strong, silent set, and Poppy, probably the worst player on my team, but fun to be and talk with), stayed in a very nice house owned by a doctor. In this home, we had access to a color TV,

a giant pool table, neat furniture, and other fineries. I figured this place would flip the guys out. After two days in this environment, Vernon called me to the window. "This place is nice to visit, but I wouldn't want to live here. Look out there. There ain't nobody in the street. Everybody stays in their house. You never get to meet anybody. And you have to get in a car to get to a store. I want to get back to Brooklyn and get with the people."

It struck me that Vernon was totally "city." His life and world view had been shaped by the buildings and alleys of New York as mine had been shaped by the suburbs of the midwest. He felt as disoriented in a world of backyards and reclusive white folks as I had often felt in the crowded, cluttered streets of East New York, Brooklyn.

We got burned out again that year. We were living on the third floor of a four story building. First the fourth floor burned out, then the ground floor, and then, while Donna and I were in Boston in Shiloh's behalf, the second went. We came home to find that our friends, the firemen, had again knocked out our windows and there was now a hole in our living room floor through which we could see into the apartment below. We had not lost much because our neighbors had locked up our stuff and chased away invaders, but we decided that maybe the Lord was trying to tell us something. We decided to move.

So, as our third year began, we moved around the corner and down the block into a new building. In it lived a prostitute who tried to ply her trade on me. She would grab me by my arm as I went by and announce to whomever was around, "I got me a blond one!" When she said this, my hair would be blond, but my face would be red. One day she got rather, I guess one would say, forward. As I began to climb the stairs (we lived on the fourth floor), she blocked my way.

"Where's your wife?" she inquired.

"Oh, she's visiting her sister in Philadelphia."

Moving closer, she grasped my hand and placed it on her posterior. (Let the reader be assured that I removed it post haste).

"Let's go get a beer," she suggested.

"I don't believe I want any," I coughed.

"You don't expect me to buy my own beer?" she queried with hurt in her voice.

"I don't think they'll give it to you for free," I answered and walked on.

Cool, huh?

That same week I had another adventure. I was again walking up the stairs and as I got to our landing, I heard somebody running up the stairs to the roof. When I began to unlock the door, I found that I did not have to—someone had done it for



me. I walked in and found a Puerto Rican dude tossing my wife's underwear in the air.

"What's happening, Jack?" I asked.

"Well, uh, uh, there were two colored guys who broke in, and I just came to check it out."

(Uh, huh.) "Well, this is my apartment," I affirmed.

"Well, uh, there were two colored guys, two colored guys." All this time he was moving towards the door.

"Where do you live, anyway?" I asked.

"Uh, downstairs," he said, going past me to the door.

"Well, maybe you had better go. Your friends just went up on the roof."

At this point, he ran out the door and up on the roof. Strange for a guy who lived downstairs, I thought.

Anyway, I was feeling pretty cool. After all, I had just successfully dealt with a hoodlum. I strutted casually around my domain to make sure that all was still intact. All seemed well, and then I thought of the one worldly good that I really valued—my new guitar. I dashed to the room where I kept it and guess what? The one worldly good that I valued was gone.

I was infuriated. I grabbed the metal pole from the police lock and ran up onto the roof to kill me a Puerto Rican. Fortunately for me, he was long gone, or he probably would have knifed me or something. I descended from the roof and paced around the apartment. "Good grief, God, why my guitar?" But I told myself I would have to adjust. After all, trusting the Lord means finding his purpose in the rough times, too. I can gain a spiritual lesson from this, I determined.

Well, to help me ponder this conviction further, my hoodlum friend from "downstairs" returned on the morrow. I trudged up the steps at the end of the day to find my door again open and everything in the place worth stealing evaporated. Apparently my friend had recovered from his encounter with me.

**S**hortly thereafter, the city placed us in a new and nicer apartment, our fifth in Brooklyn. A neighbor gave us a TV—she didn't see how any young couple could make it without a TV—and we were relaxing and feeling like real community residents. Not all community residents were relaxing, however. Many of the young men were organizing themselves and bringing about the rebirth of the gangs that had faded out with the coming of the drug scene.

A gang called the Tomahawks became the dominant one in our area. It was composed of black youths (by their own estimate there were four hundred members in the immediate area and three thousand in Brooklyn) who got their name by slashing school bus tires with hatchets.

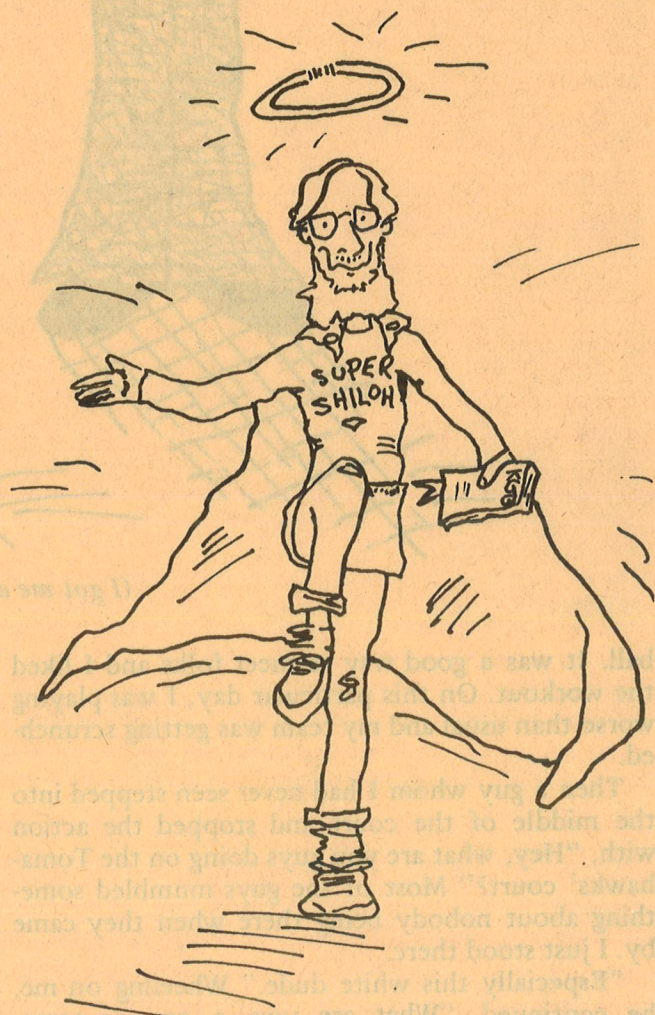
One day a Shiloh worker noticed a group of guys gathered in a lot across the street from some of the Shiloh housing. They had formed a circle and two of the guys were in the middle fighting. The worker asked a younger kid standing nearby what was happening.

"Oh, that's the Tomahawks having war practice," the youngster replied. "But don't worry, they're a good gang. They only kill junkies and white people."

"Oh. That's cool."

Actually, we were on quite amiable terms with the "Hawks," as they were also called. We knew several of them and I had no hassle until one day in the middle of our fourth year in Brooklyn.

As was my custom, I went to the basketball court across the street from my building to play



("inner-city worker." The term had emotional neon lights around it.)





(I got me a blond one!)

ball. It was a good way to meet folks and I liked the workout. On this particular day, I was playing worse than usual and my team was getting scrunched.

Then a guy whom I had never seen stepped into the middle of the court and stopped the action with, "Hey, what are you guys doing on the Tomahawks' court?" Most of the guys mumbled something about nobody being there when they came by. I just stood there.

"Especially this white dude." Wheeling on me, he continued, "What are you, a cop or something?"

"Nope."

"What are you doing here?" he persisted.

"Playing ball."

"With who?" my inquisitor continued.

I pointed out my teammates. He responded by rapping the stick that he carried against my side. He hit me a couple more times with the stick and then moved in to punch me in the face.

All I did was ask, "What is happening? Why are you doing this?" His response was to keep punching. The guys that I was playing with were screaming for the dude to stop, but they were afraid of the Tomahawks and he was not afraid of them.

Momentarily I said, "OK. I got your message. I'm leaving," and started to walk off. But he fol-



lowed me and punched some more. I was getting the drift, so I began to run to my apartment. Again, my assailant and his comrades pursued me. They got me in front of my building and pummelled me a few more times before they split.

They left me with bodily injuries. The bone supporting my left eye was shattered. I also had one of the most colorful "black eyes" I have ever seen.

In another sphere, they left me with a barrage of emotional explosions. I was filled with anger, much of which I directed toward God. My fist shook with Job's. Why, God, why? Aren't you all powerful? And aren't you supposed to care about me? Then why did you let that guy stand there and pound me? Were you asleep, or don't I matter enough for you to move your hand? My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

I found it difficult to pray. Frankly, I didn't want to. I wanted to punish God for his betrayal.

And I raged against the community. How much of my life, my care must I give you before I warrant safe passage in your streets? And is my commitment to racial brotherhood to be repaid by racial violence?

My anger was mixed with a considerable quantum of fear. I had images of the Hawks coming back and finishing the job or perhaps harassing my wife. When I pondered these possibilities, I felt within myself the capacity to kill—a new and frightening feeling.

But I also encountered another kind of fear—fear arising from a feeling of impotence. I felt incapable of functioning in a world that seemed so unjust and full of hate. And I felt that there was nothing I could do to gain the protection of God or the love of those around me to make functioning a possibility.

But as time passed, God spoke to me, as he did to Job. He spoke through my wife, friends, community residents, a sensitive Christian counselor, the Book, and my own faith. The message was something like this: "You have my care—always. But I am not your private magician that turns your stones into flowers. I am with you—always. But you have your own feet to walk upon. You are not powerless or loveless, because you are my creation and I have given you the faculties to function in my world."

Now in my fifth year in East New York, I look back on the beating and its aftermath with considerable appreciation. It opened areas to myself that I want to continue to explore. Through it God delivered a message important to my faith and functioning. I must confess, however, that if he has another message of such import, I would probably rather he drop it in the mail.

am, as noted, in my fifth year in Brooklyn. I am not as skinny as I used to be; I certainly am as white; I feel that my faith has deepened and matured. And before I end this brief history, I want to make the following notations.

Many of the experiences related here are somewhat unusual, at least for most of the people who will probably read this article. Few of you, I imagine, have been accosted by a prostitute or killed 1078 roaches in eight weeks time.

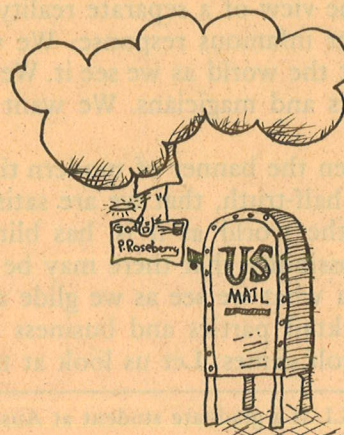
But these "somewhat unusual" experiences do not define what Brooklyn has been for me. I have not written of the ordinary mothers and fathers raising their children, the helpful neighbors, the postmen, shopkeepers, and joyous children that have filled my life in Brooklyn. These have been omitted, not because they have been absent, but because they are so "normal." I do not wish to create the image that the moment you walk into Brooklyn, roaches crawl up your leg and someone beats you up. If that were true, I would be writing from my mother's basement, not Brooklyn.

I did not explore factors that seem to me to go into creating what we call a ghetto.

Also, I have not been able, again due to time and space, to share some of the rich experiences with my wife and my family of fellow ministers. The warmth and care I have received from these sources has been invaluable.

And I want to address myself to a question that I sometimes ask myself. "Why have I stayed here for five years?" The answer is, simply: I have enjoyed it. I have enjoyed my East New York neighbors. I have developed a respect for their warmth and openness to me and their struggle for dignity. I have enjoyed my fellow ministers and our common work. And I have appreciated the challenge to my faith.

MISSION



*(I would probably rather He drop it in the mail.)*



# SEEING A SEPARATE REALITY

BY STEVEN SPIDELL

Carlos Castaneda, through the teachings of his mentor Don Juan, has sought to bring attention to the density and depth of human existence. For a people such as we, accustomed to living on the surface of life, shying away at the first hint of true emotion and feeling, this must be a prophetic word for our time. But yet, as the work of all prophets, it will go unheeded by all but a few. And strangely enough, the answering cry with which we will shout down the view of a separate reality, will be the stirring, but infamous response: We want the truth. We want the world as we see it. We want no land of mystics and magicians. We want the real world.

Such has been the banner of modern times. Yet the lie of this half-truth, that we are satisfied and content with the world as it is, has blinded our eyes to the possibility that there may be more to the world than what we see as we glide along the surface of cocktail parties and business meetings and weekend golf games. Let us look at the world

we live in, and see what truth there is reflected for us.

Look at the very symbol of our prosperity and freedom: the apartment complex. Where outer-directed, energetic young men and women live, whose fulfillment and joy comes from a good job well done. Where they need not know their next door neighbor because their lives are already so full of meaning and purpose. Where they retire at the end of the day, full of the knowledge that they have truly expressed themselves, happy in the knowledge that they have made the world a better place in which to live, anxious for the new day to dawn. Where in the club, secure, happy people gather to relax and enjoy each other's company, because of the honesty and openness and friendliness of contented people. To all appearances, such is the truth of apartment living.

Look into the fine homes of those who have advanced in means and achievement. Where stable and secure people live together, sharing one another's joys and pains. In whose homes there is no discord or serious misunderstanding, but merely

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STEVEN SPIDELL is a graduate student at Austin Presbyterian Seminary in Austin, Texas.



the usual problems of living. Where the wife is fulfilled and content in her responsibilities as homemaker. Where the children feel truly secure and comfortable. Where the husband relaxes and enjoys being himself with his family. Surely, this is the truth of suburban living.

And consider the church. Here is truth incarnate. Where committed Christians pour forth their praise and adoration to the Lamb that was slain. Where men and women, boys and girls, are filled with the grace of God. Where they know the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit. Where love and fellowship reign supreme. Where, in generosity, those who have so much render to those who have so little. Undoubtedly, this is the church as we know it. Where we "one another's failings hide, and show a brother's love."

Yes, this is the truth. This is the world in which we live. There are no lonely, alienated people in apartment complexes. There are no shattered and unloving families. There are no angry and embittered Christians. We are happy in our world. If there are still minor problems, they can be solved. If there is maladjustment or unhappiness, well, time heals all wounds.

If this is your truth, if this is your world, then so be it. But if it is not, if you somehow feel that perhaps not all of the truth has been told, perhaps you would like to take a lesson from Don Juan.

On one of their trips into the Mexican desert in search of power, Don Juan made Carlos participate in this exercise:

Don Juan pointed to a large bush and told me to fix my attention not on the leaves but on the shadows of the leaves. . . . In order to gain a glimpse of a separate reality, one must learn to not do what one usually does, to not see what one usually sees. . . . In the case of looking at a tree, what I knew how to do was to focus immediately on the foliage. The shadows of the leaves or the spaces in between the leaves were never my concern. His last admonitions were to start focusing on one single branch and then eventually work my way to the whole tree, and not to let my eyes go back to the leaves. . . .

As long as we are satisfied never to probe beneath the surface of our lives, to search out the cracks in the structure of existence, we will never know more about our lives in the world than what we see reflected. But if we have the will and the grace to shift our attention from the obvious, we may get a glimpse of a whole other world which, for the most part, is well concealed. If we take seriously Don Juan's suggestion to look at the shadows, we may be put in closer contact with the real lives of our fellows, in contact more with our true selves.

We might then be able to see that, for some, apartments are little more than cells where people

are driven to insulate themselves from the people they really so desperately need. And when, in the social sphere, a person leaves his cubicle for contact with others, the hollow empty lives of people reaching out to others is masked in the frenzy of meaningless chatter, drowned out in the music which blocks out sensitive listening.

We might be able to see in our fine homes that the reason that the child spends so much time in his room is not because he is tired all of the time, or because that is where the record player is, but because interaction with the rest of the family is intolerable, painful beyond words. That the drinking of husbands and wives is not to relax and unwind from a hard day, but really to deaden the feelings which they cannot deal with.

We might be able to realize that in the church we are all lost souls, who have forgotten how to pray because we have lost the sense of God's presence in our lives. And the little Messiahs who try to save others cannot even save themselves. And the love and fellowship we need to share is blocked by self-interest and insensitive childishness.

What I am suggesting by urging you to look deeper into your own lives and into the lives of others is prophetic in the truest sense of the word. For the prophets of old were not fortune-tellers or magicians. They were "seers." They were individuals who were blessed and cursed with the capacity to see through sham and hypocrisy, deception and disguise. Because they had seen God's reality, the truth of his world, they were able to live their lives at a deeper level of consciousness and sensitivity. When they saw the shadows of the world, and the shadows in the lives of others, they proclaimed God's message of righteousness and mercy.

Perhaps our call, in these troubled times, is to become ourselves prophets to our friends and speak to them of the blessed reality of God's presence in our world. Perhaps, if we try, we may be able to hear what people are really saying behind their words, to see what other people try not to see, to understand the motivations that lie behind what a person does. To not judge others by the obvious, by the half-truths which line the surface of our ordinary lives, but to seek for the real person in each of us who is trying to break out. To accomplish this sort of sensitivity and perception demands, of course, that we seek above all else to know ourselves and the shadows of our own lives, and then know the healing presence of God. But yet, because so few of us are ourselves perfectly whole, the best we might be able to do is to work together in trying to find God in our lives. Perhaps that is at least where to begin. And, perhaps that would be enough.

**MISSION**



# SOME THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON BECOMING A FATHER

BY THOMAS E. KEMP

"You better slip into your surgical coveralls now; we're taking your wife to the delivery room." My heart thumped furiously and it seemed like all eternity stopped to join us as we watched. Pam had elected natural childbirth, and the local hospital cooperated in permitting this to be a family experience. We clasped our hands, I joined the doctor in cheering Pam's outstanding performance, and together we shared Brian's grand entry into his new world. All proceeded without complication, and Brian Thomas was in perfect condition—God be praised.

The impact of this experience for Pam and me can only be likened to a peak experience, to borrow Abraham Maslow's concept, or, more colloquially, it was a religious experience. But unlike some such experiences that burst forth powerfully and then wane, this experience continues to unfold as I ponder some theological reflections upon becoming a father.

## The Awe of the Natural . . .

An idea that seems firmly established is that if a phenomenon can be explained naturally it in no way reflects the supernatural or the mysterious. Louis Cassels calls this the "atrophy of our capacity for wonder."<sup>1</sup> No longer is God's power and majesty demonstrated by the changing of the seasons, the storm, the heavens (Job 36-37). The beauty of sunset seldom seems like God's artistry; we know it is only sunlight refracted through dust particles in the atmosphere, and that is so natural that we don't even wonder that there *is* sunlight, atmosphere and dust.

So too, we know what the ancients didn't know (Ecclesiastes 11:5) about sperm and ova, about

<sup>1</sup> Louis Cassels, *A Faith for Skeptics* (New York: New Family Library, 1971), p. 19.

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DNA and chromosomes, so that the development of a fetus and the birth of an infant seem so explicable and scientifically natural. But as I watched the development of Pam's pregnancy, Brian's movement within her womb and his growth; finally as I saw him positioning for delivery and the actual moment of Brian's grand entry into our community, I experienced wonder, excitement, joy—the awe of the natural. I'm thankful Brian's birth was treated as a natural event and that we understand the process, but that didn't make it any less wonderful nor detract from our awareness of the majesty and closeness of God during those minutes. Then I noticed the minuteness of detail—the grain of the fingernails and the precision of the fingerprints—and the completeness and complexity of this gift generated within me not only awe of the natural but also of the Creator.

## The dignity of man . . .

Becoming the father of Brian impresses me with the dignity accorded man in God's scheme of creation. A new life with unimagined potential, a "little one" such as Jesus honored as an exemplar of kingdom citizenship, a living being whose Creator anew looks upon his work and declares that "it was very good" . . . and God takes the risk and entrusts him to willfull, fallible, short-sighted, unpredictable parents to guide in the pilgrimage from infancy and its total dependency to adulthood and independence (or more properly, to interdependencies). I might botch it in any of a myriad of ways, yet God values me and invests me with the dignity of fatherhood. Becoming a father therefore has impressed me with God's regard for man and for man's role in the furtherance of his creative purposes. "... thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor" (Psalm 8:5).

## Kinship to God as Father . . .

Throughout history God has unfolded the understanding of himself in the real-life situations of men. The experience of becoming a father thus fills with greater personal meaning the concept of the Fatherhood of God. "What man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Of if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:9-11). That is real; that communicates; that elicits some of the significance of every family



on earth being named from the Father.<sup>2</sup> I observe Brian's trust as he seeks what he needs and receives it in an environment of love, and I believe I see a reflection of the relationship God seeks to maintain with me.

The biblical concept of sonship is closely related to fatherhood and suggests that the son bears his father's character.<sup>3</sup> "A righteous man who walks in his integrity—blessed are his sons after him!" (Proverbs 20:7). The responsibility is clearly mutual, not merely for the child to obey his parents but also for the parents to walk in integrity before the child. Family life thus becomes a religious experience too, responding to the divine order and reflecting the kinship of a father to the Father, whose son he is and whose character he in turn is called to bear.

#### Love as expansive/inclusive . . .

It is not a new discovery that love is expansive and inclusive, but this profound fact is reiterated through the experience of becoming a father. From God the Father down through human experiences, love has been demonstrated to reach out and to encompass more, yet without spreading itself thinner. I am deeply aware of loving Brian while not loving Pam any the less but possibly more. Becoming a father therefore has been a blessing by tapping more of my love-potential. Again my experience of fatherhood elucidates something of the nature of God, namely the expansiveness of his love as he reaches out to enfold more children into his family.

#### Redefinition of male identity . . .

Many Christians perpetuate cultural stereotypes and rigid role definitions of maleness and femaleness. The male is rational, unemotional, strong-willed, tough, "wearing the pants" in the family and taking on the world on behalf of his family. But becoming a father has exposed to me a very different picture of strength, a new dimension of manhood, a new freedom to be. Becoming a father has meant tenderness, the ecstasy at childbirth, joyful tears, the panorama of emotions and behaviors subsumed under "love." Parenting a little fellow makes toughness and strength irrelevant and unemotionality unfortunate. Jesus took infants into his arms, held them and in laying hands on them

blessed them,<sup>4</sup> serving as a model of male identity. His strength was love, tenderness and compassion; his toughness was related to forging the freedom to be and to stay his own real self; his emotions were experienced deeply and shared. As I envision Jesus holding those children in his arms I see a real man—a genuine red-blooded male—with the strength to be as creatively human and responsive as God created the potential within him.

#### The enjoyment of life . . .

To my understanding the author of Ecclesiastes had a very existential philosophy of life. Life is for living, life is now but is not forever, therefore enjoy what God grants you in the present. To me as a father this means first of all to find enjoyment in fatherhood—counterbalancing the weight of its responsibilities—and to savor every phase of Brian's development as it is happening—there will be no reruns.

I observe Brian to be a happy baby when I see him suckling at the breast, peacefully asleep, scanning his world from the crib, and making his little sounds. He hasn't learned to fear, to be anxious and uptight, to doubt, to be ambitious and striving. Wouldn't my life be more enjoyable if it were related to my Father in childlike joy, trust and peace, apart from fear, anxiety, doubt and ambition?

#### The meaning of hope . . .

One night when Brian awoke I walked with him until he again was asleep. During those moments I reflected on the meaning of hope. What will Brian become? It was obviously an unanswerable question, but the emotional complex that the thought evoked strengthened me with hope for the experiences of fatherhood. For in that moment hope meant self-acceptance and self-awareness, with trust in God and in the power of love, to face into the future in the certainty that that future is an inexhaustible source of newness of life where God is personally involved in the process of bringing his creative purposes to completion.

Father, from whom my fatherhood is named, may this *pot pourri* of reflections duly reverence that estate which you are allowing me to share and inspire me to proceed through many months of fatherhood as a religious experience. Amen. **MISSION**

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 3:14-15.

<sup>3</sup> John 5:19-20.

<sup>4</sup> Mark 10:13-16.



# A Faith That Unifies

RENEWAL IN THE PULPIT

BY HAROLD KEY

"I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day." That is my sentiment as well as that of the apostle Paul. You see, my faith is in Jesus. It is not in myself—not in anything that I have done, or not done, or become. My faith is not in understanding all about the Lord God, nor in understanding how that the life and death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth can atone for my sins and put me right with the heavenly father. I think I understand a little of the staggering ideas that are involved in such a salvation. But I anticipate learning much, much more about it both in this life and in the life to come. So, I can't afford to rely on my knowledge and achievement, but I thank God through Jesus Christ that I can rely on his. Mine is so imperfect and inadequate, but his is all-sufficient.

I say all this about myself because it is directly involved in any serious discussion of faith, especially "the faith that unifies." What we have to do first of all is to distinguish between "faith" and "the faith." This is not always easy to do, but it is vital. Let me assure you that your salvation doesn't depend upon your understanding what I say nor agreeing with me if you do. Of course, I think such would be helpful to all of us. It would allow some of us who may still be struggling toward the assurance of salvation to relax and praise God for his giving it to us already. It would also allow us to embrace brethren from whom we have been separated because we mistakenly regarded them as "unfaithful."

It is regrettable that "faith" has become largely a creedal term with a constricted religious meaning when it is really a phenomena which underlies all personal relationships. Day in and day out, we

walk by faith. We relate to one another by faith. Without the exercise of faith our world of daily relationships would disintegrate. The most common and meaningful of all human relationships is based upon the foundation of faith. To try to put the husband-wife and parent-child relation upon the basis of correct intellectual comprehension or upon complete obedience of rules, rather than simple trusting faith in one another, is to rob the family relationship of its richness.

When the Wyclif Bible translators were trying to put the scriptures into the dialect of one of the Indian tribes of South America, they experienced great difficulty with the native word for faith. This was solved unexpectedly one day when at sundown one of the Indian workers sat down wearily in a chair beside the translator and remarked with a sigh, "How good that I can rest my entire weight upon this." That was it! The word the translator had been looking for: "rest my entire weight upon."

Faith is simply "reliance upon." That's why faith has to have an object. It is absolutely impossible to merely have faith. We have to have faith *in* something. And it is the object of one's faith which determines whether the believer is blessed or cursed. Reliance upon that which collapses is, of course, to be let down. Faith in someone who is unworthy is to be disappointed and embittered eventually. When people become disillusioned by and embittered toward segments of contemporary society such as our youth, our schools, our police, our courts, our government, the United States, or anything else, what does such disillusionment indicate as to where one's faith has actually been placed? The Christian's faith is in Jesus Christ. This is why his disciples are not embittered nor do they feel betrayed and let down by the failures and imperfections of the whole or any segment of contemporary society. This is why Christians really believe in and stake their all only

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upon him who is the express image of the invisible God, whose righteousness is incontestable, whose power is infinite, and whose mercy is indisputable. When one is resting his very life upon another, he had better choose that one whom sin cannot corrupt and death cannot hold.

The point is, early Christian faith was not *doctrinal* in essence, but *personal*. Men and women looked at the loveliness of the crucified and risen Jesus and thrilled to confess him as their Lord and Savior, the one whose life and death on their behalf put them perfectly right with God. His death assured them of God's mercy, and his resurrection assured them of God's power. In him they all, young and old, weak and strong, learned and unlearned, rich and poor—all of them had equal standing as disciples of Christ, members of his body (the *koinonia*), children of the same heavenly father. Thus, the faith that brought them to God through Jesus Christ brought them to one another. Faith in Jesus that united them with God also united them with one another.

The apostle Paul was not using idle words when he wrote to the quarrelling Corinthian brethren: "I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). He was well aware that it is by faith in Christ Jesus that we are justified and by faith in Christ Jesus that we are unified. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God . . . While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly . . . But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:1-2,6,8). "Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Romans 15:7).

What I have been trying to say with regard to the nature of faith, *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible* says very succinctly: "Clearly the general thought (of the entire *pistis-pisteuo* word group) is of trust rather than as belief in true doctrine or the like" (p. 288). *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* makes this comment regarding the *pistis-pisteuo* word group: "the conviction and trust to which a man is impelled by a certain inner and higher prerogative and law of his soul; credence given to; place reliance upon" (p. 511). "A conviction or belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things . . . trust combined with holy fervor" (p. 512). With both Thayer and Hastings "to believe" or have "faith in" denotes

intensity of confidence rather than accuracy of ideas. Faith originally was personal rather than creedal.

Faith in Jesus Christ is spiritual certainty of a reality which stands behind the evidence of the physical senses and which is supremely demonstrated in Jesus Christ. Such faith produces the attitude of obedience. It is the state of such confidence that the whole relationship with God is put on the proper basis. And so scripture declares that we are "justified by faith" (Romans 3:28; 5:1; Galatians 2:16; 3:8,24).

To emphasize the personal rather than creedal nature of faith, the esteemed Moses E. Lard in his *Commentary on Romans* drops the English word "faith" altogether and uses instead the word "belief." He explains: "It will be noticed that I here use the word belief instead of the word faith; and as this usage will continue throughout the present work, it is proper to assign a reason for it. We have in the original two words, *pistis* and *pisteuo*, both having the same root and same meaning with the single distinction, that the one is a verb, the other a noun. The verb strictly means to believe, and is uniformly so translated in the scriptures.

"But if it is alleged that the words belief and faith differ in sense; and that the latter only, and not the former, correctly translates the original, I deny the allegation. It has no foundation in fact. The one word has not a shade of meaning which the other has not. Faith in Christ and belief in Christ are not different expressions for different things, but different expressions for the same thing. No distinction whatever exists between them. To say, as is sometimes done, that faith embraces the affections of the heart, while belief does not, is to draw on metaphysics for our tenets, and not on the New Testament.

"Besides, a world of error and superstition has collected about the word faith, which does not attach to the word belief. With the disuse of the word faith will go in part, at least, this error and superstition. It is therefore best to give up the word. In belief we have all that is in faith; hence in parting from faith we lose no truth, nor is what is here said true merely of a single book in the New Testament. The word faith should wholly disappear from (all) its pages. This is not, I grant, likely to happen soon; but it is not the less necessary. It is a weakness of our nature that our attachment to what we happen to be familiar with often leads us to prefer the objectionable to the faultless" (Lard, pp. 31-32).

So we come back to our beginning. In the New Testament writings, Christian faith, saving faith, the faith that justifies, is belief in Jesus Christ as



God's means of righteousness for sinners. It is belief in a person rather than in a position. If we can in any sense say properly that the Christian has a creed, we would have to say that his creed is Christ. But even to say this tends to introduce the dichotomy of "faith" versus "*the faith*," or (to defer to Moses E. Lard) "belief" versus "*the belief*."

Belief in Jesus Christ is unifying by its very essence because our attention and trust are focused upon him. But "*the belief*" is divisive by its very essence in that attention is focused not upon *who*, but upon *what* is believed and trust is placed in the correctness of the total cluster of ideas and concepts which are accepted as comprising "*the belief*." It is significant to note that scripture declares that we are "justified by faith" (Romans 3:28; 5:1; Galatians 2:16, 3:8,24), but never does it say that we are justified by "*the faith*."

But someone is sure to note that the scriptures do contain expressions which are translated as "the faith." Perhaps the passage that comes first to mind is Jude 3, where it admonishes: "Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." Therefore, it is valid to speak of "the faith" and distinguish it from that which is contrary to the faith (or the belief). Now there are two ways to regard "the faith," "the belief," or "sound doctrine."

The first and simplest way is to speak of "the faith" as being our conviction that somehow through his life, death and resurrection, Jesus of Nazareth puts us right with God. In this regard, the emphasis is placed upon the certainty that Jesus is our Savior. In Jude 3 the expression "the faith" is in apposition with the preceding expression "our common salvation." So, we read the whole verse: "Beloved, being very eager to write to you of our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend, for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." In this way it is quite proper for us to speak with regard to that reliance upon Jesus Christ which we have in common and to be able to tell unbelievers why we rely upon him.

**B**ut there is another way of speaking of "the faith" which is essentially creedalism. "The faith" is not equated with correct traditional statements regarding the ideas and concepts involved in our salvation. While this superficially may seem to be a necessary requirement, the early leaders of the Restoration Movement in America resolutely refused to accept

creeds of any sort. There is an unspeakably vast distinction between trusting in Jesus Christ and trusting in a creed about Jesus Christ. The first is reliance upon him and him alone. The second is reliance upon the ability to make correct statements about him, which, after all, is human ability.

Opposition to creeds as tests of fellowship among believers in Christ was one of the outstanding characteristics of the Restoration Movement. "No creed but Christ!" they declared. It was in this frame of reference that the motto was coined: "In faith, unity; in opinion, liberty; in all things, charity." Thus was begun, as declared by Alexander Campbell, "a project to unite the Christians in all the sects." In the final analysis though, Christian unity is not something made by man, but is the creation of God. The family of God is entered upon the basis of one's faith in Jesus Christ rather than on the basis of one's faith in the correctness of propositional statements about a religious system. The differences between first century Jews and Gentiles, barbarian slaves and cultivated Greeks were so great that the only thing that really united any of them was their common allegiance to Jesus Christ. "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26-28).

Mortal men never have and never will all comprehend abstract or propositional truth in exactly the same degree. Nor will any one of us ever arrive at perfect understanding of the wisdom of God until this mortal shall have put on immortality. "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood" (1 Corinthians 13:12). Therefore, we have a real basis for maintaining humility toward God and one another in recognizing that there is always a distinction between the word of God and our understanding of it. For as scripture declares: "If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know" (1 Corinthians 8:2).

Of course, God wants us to know his will and to know it fully. There are no mistakes or inadequacies on his part. But because of human immaturity, deprivation of equal opportunity, and other variables of heredity and environment, even if we hear the same words, the import or interpretation is subject to variation. For instance, there was the small-town miss who was so enamored with what she thought was the superior quality of her own voice that she just had to go to the big city and



have an audition with the great teacher. She returned even more enraptured, telling her parents that the teacher had pronounced her voice as "simply heavenly!" Not quite willing to accept this appraisal, the parents inquired of her younger brother who had also gone along. The boy's reply was, "That might have been what he meant, but what he actually said was that her voice is *unearthly*!" Conditioning does make a decided difference in the interpretation of data.

This illustrates the impossibility of formulating either written or unwritten creeds as a basis of insuring unity. The more specific and explicitly that men try to formulate correct statements to which assent is demanded by others, the more devisive the situation becomes. This is why no formal confession, with precise wording, is found in the New Testament scriptures as a catechism or blueprint for men to require of one another.

This principle of unity in faith allowing diversity of opinion is illustrated in Abraham's offering up Isaac his son. The test of Abraham's faith was not simply in sacrificing the life of his son, but in sacrificing him through whom God had promised the inheritance and universal blessing. The problem before Abraham was if he obeyed God how could God fulfill his promise? Abraham's faith was that God would do exactly what he had promised to do, and that was all that God required Abraham to believe. His opinion, however, was that God would accomplish his promise by raising Isaac from the dead. In his faith Abraham was right and completely acceptable to God. In his opinion he was wrong, but none the less acceptable in the sight of God, because his opinion did not diminish his trust in the Lord nor lead him to disobey him.

And this is the real test of the innocence or perniciousness of one's opinion. As long as the opinion does not diminish one's estimate of the trustworthiness of the Lord and willingness to obey him, it will not interfere with that person's salvation.

The obedience of faith will lead any believer to attempt to do whatever he believes is the Lord's will for him. He arrives at his conclusions through various means such as commands, inferences and examples. His conclusions (or convictions) may be well-founded or far-fetched. But, regardless of the basis of his convictions, he is obligated to honor them until such time as he may come to believe differently. Fidelity to one's own convictions (scruples) is what Jesus meant in Matthew 5:8 by "the pure in heart," which is more vividly rendered by the Phillips translation as "the utterly sincere."

It is concerning one's scruples that the Apostle Paul writes in the fourteenth chapter of Romans—a belief or intellectual conviction held in all sincer-

ity. However, much mischief has been done by taking the last words of the last verse and applying them contrary to the text. The King James Version renders it: "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin." This is often taken out of context and used with another passage: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17), with the conclusion that anything not directly stated in scripture is not by the word of God and therefore is sinful. The mismatch of these scriptures is easily seen from the contexts. "Faith" that comes by hearing the word of Christ in Romans 10:17 means reliance upon Jesus Christ whom the Jews had rejected. "Faith" in Romans 14:23 means the scruples of one who is already relying upon Jesus Christ.

This fourteenth chapter of Romans is a powerful admonition to Christians who differ in opinions (or scruples) to bear with each other and not dispute with one another. The important thing is summed up in verse 22: apply your scruples to yourself and live according to your own convictions rather than condemning a brother for what his conscience allows or disallows him to do. In verse 3 the instruction is to let not one who refrains from something (because he concludes that to refrain is the Lord's will) condemn one who practices that thing (because he concludes that such practice is the Lord's will). The truth is that because each is acting sincerely upon his own conviction toward the Lord, the Lord gives both of them equal standing in the *koinonia*, or community of saints.

In the thirteenth verse we are admonished to quit judging the faithfulness of others on the basis of our own scruples. Quit demanding that they respect our consciences and start respecting theirs. In the next verse it is declared that nothing is intrinsically unholy; but nonetheless, it is unholy to whomever thinks that it is. If we must be critical, let us be critical of our own conduct and see that we do nothing to make a brother stumble. "Accept one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Romans 15:7).

Blessed is the person who maintains his own integrity without passing judgment upon his brother. God help us to distinguish between what he has actually said and our conclusions of what he meant. May we never attempt to bind another by the restrictions of our own scruples. May we recognize the vital distinction between a common trust in Jesus (a belief or faith that unifies) and the response which springs from such trust. May we know that essential difference between reliance upon our precious Savior who himself puts us right with God and our resultant concept of obligation because we have been put right by him.

**MISSION**



# KNOW YE THE LORD?

BY ALLEN HOLDEN, JR.

I have finally come to the point where I can confront certain questions head-on, whereas once I would have avoided them. The classic, "Are you saved?" is no longer a frightening question. I used to answer it with such responses as "I hope so," or "I will be," or "I don't know." To come right out and say "Yes" was not the easiest thing for me to do.

Other questions are still very difficult for me to deal with. The question, "Do you *know* the Lord?" still bothers me, because it can be answered on more than one level. My first response is, "Of course I do. He's that dude who always sat around with a lamb in his arms, two kids on his knee and a halo on his head. In fact, he just made a couple of movies, didn't he?" But I get the feeling that that's not really what my friend had in mind when he asked the question. For there are so many people that I know *of*, but I can't honestly say I know them. In view of recent events, we as a nation can say we knew who Richard Nixon was, but we didn't really *know* him, and the difference is a very painful one.

I really started thinking about what it means to know Jesus when I was an undergraduate at Cornell. It finally dawned on me that the real need in my life, and in the lives of my fraternity brothers, fellow students and church acquaintances, was a genuine encounter with Jesus Christ, wherein we come to know know him in a personal manner. Concordance in hand, I began to search out what the Bible had to say on the subject. I came to see that this bit about knowing God and his son was a lot more involved than I had realized.

I found John writing that knowing God and Jesus Christ is eternal life. I heard Paul say that he made this knowledge his chief goal in life, and in pursuit of this goal he considered everything else just so much "dung," in the words of the Authorized Version. In 2 Peter, I learned that through this knowledge of Jesus Christ I could escape the defilements of the world, and could have access to all things that pertain to life and godliness.

And yet I knew that this was more than just an

acquaintance with historical facts, for there are few people today who don't know about the existence of a historical Jesus, and it seemed pretty clear that they weren't all recipients of all these benefits. Nor was it a mere intellectual knowledge, for I myself had read, outlined, memorized and recited a lot of the facts concerning this Jesus of Nazareth, and that didn't cut it either. My concordance led me to 2 Corinthians 5:21, where it says that Jesus "knew no sin." Yet, I knew that Jesus obviously was intellectually acquainted with sin, or else he wasn't God. So I came to see that this knowledge must involve some experience. The Old Testament provided some interesting assistance in this area. I used to always wonder about all the references to Adam knowing Eve and then Eve bearing a child as a result of that. Was that just a way that the King James translators were avoiding the issue, or did this knowledge of God have some similarity to the sexual union? Ironically, my knowledge in this area was all on an intellectual level. I knew all about sexual intercourse from all the traditional sources, but I wasn't to experience it until after my wedding, some three months later. The difference can be appreciated by anybody who was once twenty-one, red-blooded, and a newlywed.

My Bible study suddenly became much more rewarding. Besides an increased interest in studying the Song of Solomon, I came to appreciate the way Paul compared Christ's relationship to the church and a marriage between a man and a woman (Ephesians 5). The only point I ever got out of that was that husbands should have the same self-giving feeling for their wives that Jesus had for his body, the church. But it cuts both ways. The verse also gives us an insight into how deep and genuine Christ's feelings for the church are, when we think of the love a married couple enjoy.

In the three years that I've been married to Carla, I've been moved often by the comparison that Paul makes. I think of the openness and candor that Carla and I share, and how this had to develop gradually, over a period of time—the special vocabulary we've developed, and the sharing of feelings so deep and painful that I could hardly admit them to myself; the willingness to bare myself before her, and trust myself completely to her. Not only do I let her share my bed, but my kitchen, my living room and my bathroom as well. And even the spats and the reconciliations tell me something about the Christ-church relationship that I need to know. I think of the ecstasy, the giving, the pain and the joy.

Thank you, Carla. Not only have you helped me to know you, but I have come to know myself a lot better. And in the process, I am learning what it means to know the Lord.

**MISSION**

ALLEN HOLDEN, JR. received his degree in engineering from Cornell University. He is currently a traffic engineer for the city of Fort Worth, Texas.



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# FORUM

## Freeing Christian Women . . .

I have just received the March issue of *Mission*. It is a dream come true. Each day that passes I am more amazed at the number of strong, vital, growing women within our fellowship. It is so exciting to see more and more women coming alive from within themselves—prompted by God's spirit to stretch and seek and be and do. And it is crushing to see how very many are walking zombies doing what they have been told to do all of their lives without giving it a thought. Your latest issue is just one more step in freeing Christian women to be what they were created to be.

I cannot tell you how much I appreciate your devoting an entire issue to our seminar in Austin. It was a day that changed many lives, and because of *Mission* it will change many more. I am overwhelmed by the implications and impact the seminar and your follow-up report will have on the lives of many women and men within the Church of Christ. Some will pay no attention. Some will be incensed. But many will hear and listen for the first time to our cry for full personhood that will never be quieted until full equality has been achieved within the church.

When Valerie Collins and I began to explore the idea of having such a seminar we wanted to reach the women we knew to be frustrated with their role in the church and home and let them know they were not alone—they need not hide any longer. We have been awed by the re-

sponse. It is the most exciting search that I have been a part of in my adult life. I thank *Mission* for its care and concern for the women in the Church of Christ. May God, our Mother, bless you.

ROBYN WHITE

Houston, Texas

## The Rorschach Cover . . .

As a trustee of *Mission*, and remembering the mixed but heart-felt and loudly-expressed reactions to the "Watergate" cover (March 1974), I wondered what would be the comments about the cover of the March 1975 issue, "Women in Christ Today." Consequently, I decided to ask.

The cover soon proved to be similar to a Rorschach test. "Why is the woman's face cut off?" asked one. "The anonymity of women, or men, is reprehensible." Another countered that the "facelessness" was not only an ironic pictorial statement of women's position in the church, but that it thus made the figure representative—"Every-woman," as it were. One person never saw an individual at all but rather an abstract picture; another was so eager to read about "Women in Christ Today" that the cover could just as well have been missing.

However, another individual, upon detecting what looked suspiciously like a cleavage, threw down the magazine in disgust. This opinion was somewhat echoed by one who muttered about analogies to *Playboy*; another, who saw a parody of a *Harvard*

*Business Review* cover; and, a few, who insisted that, while they themselves were totally unoffended, what might others think? In contrast, someone else protested that the picture was simply trying to express the complex nature of today's woman which involves her sexuality, her cultural conflicts, and her religious faith. Another person's focus was totally upon the fish pendant worn, only wondering whether or not *Mission* readers would understand the symbolism of the Greek *ichthys*.

I would like to have more faith in *Mission* readers than to believe either that they will allow themselves to fall into the old trap of judging a book by its cover (favorably or otherwise) or that they may not easily grasp symbolism. As to the varying viewpoints on Phil Hollenbeck's cover photo, I agree that the cover is revealing—not of the woman photographed—but rather, of our own perceptions and inner nature.

Special congratulations to Bobbie Lee Holley for her own excellent article, "God's Design: Woman's Dignity" as well as for her compilation in the March issue of a variety of written expressions of where women in Christ are today. We need more public expressions from women in the church.

SALLIE T. HIGHTOWER

Houston, Texas

## God's grace felt . . .

Not until I experienced the loving fellowship of a beautiful



group of Christians in London, England did I grasp with my mind the beauty of God's grace, nor until then was it more than an empty New Testament word I'd read all my life. But not until I read Bobbie Lee Holley's article, "God's Design: Woman's Dignity" (March, 1975), and its beautiful, biblical affirmation of womankind did I grasp, with my soul, God's grace for me—as a woman, as a person. My deep gratitude to her and to *Mission*, for God's grace not only seen but felt.

LYNETTE HUNTER  
Trenton, New Jersey

#### Reflections on elders . . .

Please allow me to speak freely on "It Shall Not Be So Among You," by Norman Parks.

From decades ago I recall an article or two by this brother on the unadmitted clergy-laity distinction that prevails among many brethren. To me his articles have always seemed unbiased, clear, relevant and thought-provoking. Regarding his recent series I would like to present three reflections.

First, the concept of the servant of all as the greatest looms large among the true disciples. Our Chief Shepherd's will is to do his spiritual pastoring through the kind who gird on the towel and wash the feet of the friends. For one thing the sheep themselves cannot bear the voice of their shepherd in anyone motivated by worldly ambition. The deceived who think that they

hear his voice there will not be among the very elect.

Paul cited the household of Stephanus as having set themselves to minister to the saints. "Would that," says Paul, "even you may be subject to persons like this."

Second, the point does stand that the essential power of an elder lies in his example. Nevertheless, he also retains an effective utterance (logos) powerful enough to convict men who contradict the truth (Titus 1:9-11). It will even muzzle them. Such teaching does not require physical force any more than the teaching of Paul toward Elymas (Acts 13:12) or of Peter toward Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:5, 9).

The quibble on *peithesthe* in Hebrews 13:17 proves characteristic of the human ingenuity that defends nearly all denominational concepts. I suppose that bridles merely *persuade* horses, rather than requiring obedience of them. See *peithesthai* in James 3:3. Furthermore, if the word used for submission in 1 Corinthians 16:16 (*hypotassesthe*) really is a stronger word than that used in Hebrews 13:17, we must infer that leaders had less power than the household of Stephanus. The secret remains that the authentic power belongs to Jesus and he confers it only upon those who are in reality servants of all.

Now we come to a third and most neglected point: Since, as the article points out, the body of Christ is an *organism*, not an organization, the pastor-teachers and bishop-elders must be

created by the Holy Spirit, not by mere human convention or election. (Ephesians 4:8; Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 12:13). He alone has the power to endow these with such gifts as governments and discerning of spirits. Actually, the function of a bishop involves a military review in the Spirit. His very name (*episcopus*) reveals this function, for it is derived from the situation described in the book of Numbers, where various forms of the Hebrew verb *paqadh* are represented in the Septuagint by various forms of the Greek verb *episkeptomai*.

Have pity upon these persons from whom the Lord indeed requires an accounting. The job assumes a magnitude so immense that it can only be accomplished through the Spirit. They must continually estimate the resources of the people for entering upon their rest—the land of promise.

W. THURMAN  
Asheville, North Carolina

#### Enjoying Mission

Our family enjoyed the January issue of *Mission* . . . particularly Mr. Reynold's article, "The Sexual Revolution in America."

I also have enjoyed the articles of Norman Parks. His "It Shall Not Be So Among You" is in keeping with his usual quality of communication concerning spiritual perspectives. More of Norman Parks!

PATRICIA ALLBRITTEN  
San Jose, California



# BOOKS

Secrets of Eden: God and Human Sexuality, by Jim Reynolds.

Sweet Publishing Company, Austin, Texas 1975. Pp. 1-191. Paperback.

S\*E\*X\* has been a four letter word for so long in the Christian tradition that it has become difficult to deal intelligently with it, let alone biblically. Dr. Reynolds is a full-time minister, former professor, much sought after speaker, and confidant of many young adults. He is also a husband and father who has undertaken to respond seriously to the church's neglect and abuse of the biblical teaching on human sexuality. This book represents a very important first step within the church towards a rethinking of our teaching regarding sexuality. For too long, the church's view of human sexuality has been shaped and dominated by traditional, historical, and sociological factors rather than a truly biblical theology.

If church members want to continue to read the Bible to find prooftexts to substantiate their culturally informed feelings and attitudes about their sexuality, then this book will not serve their purpose. On the other hand, if church members are willing to put aside their cultural bias and be open to hearing anew the message of the biblical text, the reading of this book will be refreshing and liberating.

For most of us it has been so long since we have been in touch with the intent of the biblical text, that it takes a short period

of readjustment to get into the spirit of the text as the author opens it to us. The thing that excites me most about this book is that regardless of where one is concerning his/her sexuality, the author succeeds in carrying on an honest and loving conversation with the reader that is biblically grounded.

This isn't the first or last book that will be written about human sexuality. Since the 1950's, several important works on the subject have been written, including: Helmut Thielicke's *The Ethics of Sex*; D. Sherwin Bailey's *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* and *The Sexual Relation in Christian Thought*; William G. Cole's *Sex and Love in the Bible*; and comprehensive statements on human sexuality by Quakers and Unitarians. What is important about Dr. Reynolds' book, is that it is the first serious attempt within the Churches of Christ to deal with human sexuality biblically. The author's writing is balanced. He not only takes the biblical text seriously, but he also takes the needs of his readers seriously and tries to minister to them.

The most difficult task that faces the author and reader is to escape the dominating culturalization that permeates our society's and church's understanding of sexuality. The western world has become the receptacle of much "bad" theology due to the influence of hellenistic philosophy on the Christian church. Robert Gordis has called for the church to "de-Hellenize and re-Judaize" its teaching of human

sexuality. We would do well to hear and respond to such an exhortation. Our reversal of the biblical values and views of sexuality leads the author to surmise, "the legitimate joys of human sexuality often lie hidden to a society which has removed Eden's fig leaf from the genitals and placed it over the eyes."

Dr. Reynolds contends that both the old and new covenants pointed their participants towards a healthy view of their sexuality. However, the old covenant was not empowered to completely restore the Creator to his creation. It could not reconcile people to God, it couldn't make people whole again, it couldn't create a new person who could love passionately as God willed. Only Christ could make such a reconciliation possible, bringing new life to dry bones, filling Christians with his Spirit, freeing them to celebrate and glorify God with their bodies.

The author's synopsis of the historical events in the Christian tradition that have brought us to the so-called Sexual Revolution is convincing and convicting. He strips away the layers of tradition that we have tried for so long to substantiate and validate by illegitimate proof-texting, and calls us to re-examine and reshape our view of sexuality in keeping with the biblical teaching. One can see throughout this section, as well as the book as a whole, the influence of David Mace's *A Christian Response to the Sexual Revolution*, which adds depth and clarity to a diffi-

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# What & So What

## ACCEPTING OUR HUMANITY

In 1956 Karl Barth stood up and announced a change in the direction of theology. He called for the church to rediscover the humanity of God. A quarter of a century earlier, Barth had led the way to the emphasis on God as the "wholly other," the one beyond the creature. Now he was calling for a turn. For Barth, the humanity of God was not a contradiction of his "Godness" but an expression of it.

Still today the church needs to discover the humanity of God, for in that discovery we will begin to find ourselves, celebrating our humanity and celebrating the humanity of others as we live in human community. Our problem is not that we do not believe in God, but that we do not believe in or accept ourselves in our own humanness. It is in this failure that belief in God is blunted or perverted, or as is so often the case in religion, turned against man.

The biblical word for the church today is to be found in the Old Testament story of the creation and in the New Testament story of the new creation. In the original creation God gives us our humanity in his own image and calls it good. In the new creation in Jesus Christ, God endorses our humanity and calls us to live it. But unfortunately we are still like the sons of the generation Jesus describes in Luke 7:31-35, who saw in the austerity of John's life only an eccentric madman and in the eating and drinking of Jesus' life

only a glutton and a drunkard. When the pipes are played we cannot dance and when the dirge is sounded we cannot mourn. Our humanity, like theirs, is all too often buried or hidden behind the facades we have constructed, until we cannot really participate in the elemental facts of life. Afraid of our humanity, we become immobilized, frozen in our existence, but not free to really live.

Our humanity can get lost in our religion when our dogmas or our opinions or our traditions keep us from seeing ourselves at the very center of our being or keep us from seeing others in their humanness. Or we can lose touch with ourselves in our drive for success or status or money or power.

Perhaps this is the tragedy of America in the last few years. Concerned with our image and our power and our ideology, we have lost sight of the human. Technology often submerges the human. We have become a nation of numbers and statistics and the face of the human is lost. How true this is also of the church. Have you not felt at times that you have filled your life to the brim with "busyness" until life could be defined as "busing" instead of living?

In the midst of all this God comes to recreate in us our humanity and to endorse it in the humanness of Jesus Christ. If we keep Jesus on the divine level we can protect our lives and values from his searching inventory. But when we accept his humanity we have to face up to our own. This

means several things in a very practical way.

The term "human" is not to be used as a symbol of our sinfulness. We need no longer be plagued with guilt because we are what we are—*human*. The human God is not a negative, a disclaimer or a contradiction. It is his gift to us and his affirmation of us. To be like Jesus is to be fully human. God is no longer relegated to fairy tale land or even metaphysics, but he is with us—in us—in our humanness. The preacher in John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* gets at the point. "I'm not sayin' I'm like Jesus. But I got tired like him, an' I got mixed up like him, an' I went into the wilderness like him without no campin' stuff."

The humanity of Jesus affirms us in our own humanity. Our sinfulness is not our being human. It is in our being either less than human or in our attempts to be more than human—super human—or supernatural. One of the earliest of all Christian heresies continues to come to the surface in the church in subtle but destructive ways, namely, the denial of the humanity of Jesus.

A second thing the humanity of God means for us is that we can accept our humanity—all of it. We can accept our minds. God is not anti-intellectual. Our minds are gifts of God to be used—to think, to ponder, to explore, and to deepen our understanding of life and faith and the world around us. We can accept our bodies and celebrate the joys

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## BOOKS

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cult study. It's to the author's credit that he risks exploring several emotionally charged topics with the expressed purpose of bringing these emotions under the Lordship of Christ. He deals honestly, biblically, and decisively with such issues as: premarital sex, intimate marriage, divorce and re-marriage, women's equality, homosexuality, and abortion.

Throughout the book Dr. Reynolds refers often to the role of the church in dealing responsibly with various issues of human sexuality. The last chapter offers hope and promise, particularly the paradigm of the healing church, but it's not fully developed. Still, this chapter jerks us back into the reality of the true essence of the church's mission. The biblical message grates against our twentieth century sense of values, and I imagine many will try to rationalize the biblical intent away. The truth is, however, that we can't. Sex is here to stay. It's not like so many other "fad" issues that confront the church for a little while, and if ignored long enough, will go away. Human sexuality has been with us since God created us, and the church must face up to its responsibility to rediscover the biblical teaching about sexuality if it ever hopes to make healthy relationships between people and God possible. However, we can't do that effectively when we are still uneasy and embarrassed by our own sexuality, when our marriage manuals and sexual tech-

nique books are still hidden in the top dresser drawer under legal papers and documents, or in the bottom dresser drawer under the night clothes.

It's time for the leaders in the church and in the home to bring this area of concern into the open and deal with it intelligently, realistically, and biblically. I highly recommend this book to all persons in Christ's body as a healthy approach to human sexuality that is biblically sound and holistically valid. May the day come soon when we as a church can say in truth and celebration, "Thank God for sex!"

LERRILL WHITE

LERRILL WHITE is a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, where he studied extensively in the field of pastoral theology. He is currently pursuing a chaplaincy intern year in Clinical Pastoral Education in Denver, Colorado.

## WHAT & SO WHAT

*Continued from Page 23*

of our physical humanness. Our bodies are not of the devil. Accepting and respecting our bodies and our sexuality is doing good theology. And we can also accept our spiritual natures as part of our humanity, avoiding addiction to the ever present narcotic of a totally materialistic view of life. We are born to relate to the eternal, to contemplate God, to discover the values and depth dimensions of life that embrace our physiology and rationality and that transcend them.

Being human is not being apart from God. It is accepting the God the biblical writers talk about as he comes to us and as he gives to us ourselves. The question the humanity of God presents us with is, "Can you accept it?"

VLH

NEXT MONTH IN

**MISSION**

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